

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5691
EDDIE HAWKINS/HELSINKI

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FINNISH COMMUNISTS

ANNCR:

THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY HAS SPENT A TOTAL OF NEARLY TEN YEARS IN COALITION GOVERNMENTS SINCE 1966, BUT THE QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION BY THE PARTY IS THE CURRENT CAUSE FOR A WIDENING SPLIT IN FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY RANKS. FROM HELSINKI, EDDIE HAWKINS SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY IS DIVIDED INTO TWO DISTINCT AND OPPOSED FACTIONS -- THE MAJORITY LED BY CHAIRMAN AARNE SAARINEN, AND LARGE MINORITY LED BY DEPUTY CHAIRMAN TAISKO SINISALO. THE MAJORITY FAVORS PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT AND CURRENTLY HAS TWO OF ITS MEMBERS -- THE MINISTER OF LABOR AND THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION -- IN THE CENTER-LEFT COALITION CABINET. THE MINORITY, A STALINIST-ORIENTED GROUP, IS AGAINST TAKING PART IN ANY GOVERNMENT WITH WHAT HE CONSIDERS THE BOURGEOISE AND REVISIONIST SOCIALIST PARTIES.

THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PARTY ARE DEEPENING AS THE EIGHTEENTH PARTY CONGRESS SCHEDULED FOR THE BEGINNING OF JUNE APPROACHES. THERE IS DISAGREEMENT OVER THE CHOICE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE CONGRESS. RECENTLY (3/30), AN EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, "KANSAN UUCISET", POINTING OUT THE NEED FOR A STRONG UNIFIED PARTY, AND REMINDING THE REPRESENTATIVES WHAT THIS MEANS. THE EDITORIAL POINTED OUT THAT THE PROGRAM APPROVED IN THE LAST CONGRESS IN 1975 CONTAINED A PROVISION FOR COOPERATION IN THE GOVERNMENT AND STATED THAT EACH PARTY MEMBER HAS RIGHTS GUARANTEED BY THE REGULATIONS.

BUT THE EDITORIAL ALSO SAID THAT AS A COMMUNIST EACH ADDITIONALLY HAS THE DUTY INDIVIDUALLY TO TAKE PART IN THE FORMATION OF THE PARTY LINE -- THE IMPLIED MEANING BEING THAT THE LINE IS BINDING ON ALL PARTY MEMBERS REGARDLESS OF FACTION.

THE POSITION OF THE MAJORITY IS THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE OF ITS GOALS BY WORKING FROM WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT THAN IN THE ROLE OF AN OPPOSITION PARTY. THE MINORITY POSITION WAS SUMMED UP BY DEPUTY CHAIRMAN TAISCO SINISALO WHEN HE STATED THAT THE INTENTION IS TO TAKE COMMUNISTS INTO THE GOVERNMENT AS HOSTAGES. IN DECEMBER, AT A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, CHAIRMAN SAARINEN SEVERELY CASTIGATED THE MINORITY FACTION FOR THEIR POSITION. WHEN ASKED AFTERWARDS IF THIS MEANT HE WAS READY TO SHOW THEM TO DOOR, HE REPLIED, " 'I CERTAINLY DO MEAN THAT THIS CAN'T CONTINUE."

THERE ARE OTHER QUESTIONS INVOLVED IN THE INTERNAL DISPUTE, AS WELL. BOTH FACTIONS IN THE PARTY CLAIM TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW. BUT IT'S THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN WHO MORE OFTEN THAN NOT IS QUOTED BY PRAVDA, AND IT IS ASSERTED THAT THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY SPEAKS THROUGH THE MINORITY WING OF THE FINNISH PARTY. MOSCOW HAS TRIED TO HEAL THE SPLIT ON A NUMBER OF OCCASION BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS.

THE SEEDS OF THE CURRENT DISARRAY WITHIN THE PARTY DATE BACK TO THE MID-SIXTIES WHEN THE OLD STALINIST LEADERSHIP CAME UNDER GROWING CRITICISM FROM YOUNGER PARTY MEMBERS FOR ITS SUBSERVIENCE TO MOSCOW. SAARINEN, A PRAGMATIC AND SOMEWHAT LIBERAL LEADER WITH A TRADE UNION BACKGROUND TOOK UP THE POSITION OF CHAIRMAN, AND THE NEXT YEAR, 1967 SAW THE FOUNDING OF GROUP CALLING THEMSELVES THE INTERNAL OPPOSITION. NOW WITH

THE PARTY CONGRESS COMING UP AND THE COMMUNISTS ACTUALLY SITTING IN THE GOVERNMENT, THE OLD ARGUMENTS ARE HEATING UP AGAIN.

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE FINNISH EXPERIENCE CAN BE RELEVANT TO THE EURO-COMMUNISTS OF THE CONTINENT REMAINS UNCLEAR. THOSE COMMUNISTS WHO ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN GOVERNMENT COOPERATION SHY AWAY FROM THE TERM EURO-COMMUNISM. SAARINEN HIMSELF HAS DENIED THAT THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY CAN BE GIVEN THE SAME LABEL AS THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF FRANCE, ITALY AND SPAIN, BUT HE DOES CONCEDE THAT REGARDLESS OF DIFFERENCES IN HISTORY, POLITICAL SITUATION AND LABOR MOVEMENTS, THEY STILL HAVE A LOT IN COMMON.

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